

THE CLAUSEWITZIAN TRINITY IN THE INFORMATION AGE: A JUST WAR APPROACH

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USAWC CLASS OF 2007

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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 30 JUN 2007		2. REPORT TYPE Program Research Project		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2006 to 00-00-2007	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Clausewitzian Trinity in the Information Age A Just War Approach				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) John Mattox				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 17013-5050				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT See attached.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 32	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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USAWC PROGRAM RESEARCH PAPER

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APPROACH**

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Topic approved by
Colonel (Ret.) Walter Wood

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel John Mark Mattox

TITLE: The Clausewitzian Trinity in the Information Age:
A Just War Approach

FORMAT: DDE Research Project

DATE: 9 May 2007 WORD COUNT: 5,193 PAGES: 28

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Clausewitz's "remarkable trinity" has long been a touchstone for military realist discourse. Similarly, the just war tradition has long been a touchstone for moral discourse relating to war. Although these touchstones represent two intellectual traditions which may appear to have little or nothing in common, the 21st-century strategist or policymaker must take into account the imperatives of both traditions. This is so because, in the Information Age, public reactions to perceived moral shortcomings associated with the decision to go to war, or with perceived moral lapses on the battlefield, can significantly disrupt the balance which the "remarkable trinity" requires. Accordingly, this study takes as its task to propose a model which accommodates both military realist and just war concerns. It examines two popular interpretations of Clausewitz's "remarkable trinity." It then examines two much older trinitarian social models, which it uses as guides to discover what a model of the convergence of military realist and just war thought might look like. It then proposes a revised model of the "remarkable trinity" which accommodates just war concerns. It concludes with some reflections on contemporary applications of the model, especially as it relates to the instruments of national power.

THE CLAUSEWITZIAN TRINITY IN THE INFORMATION AGE: A JUST WAR APPROACH

Ever since the late 19th century, Carl von Clausewitz's posthumously published work, On War, has factored significantly in virtually all Anglo-American articulations of a philosophy of war. Indeed, notwithstanding the sweeping changes which have resulted from revolutions in both military and political affairs in the West, Clausewitz remains the undisputed touchstone for *military realist discourse* in the Anglo-American world.¹ In a separate but equally prominent line of development, one finds the just war tradition, which has served as the touchstone for *moral idealist discourse pertaining to war*. Indeed, inasmuch as the whole of Western military history is permeated with questions on the moral limits to be observed in war, the just war tradition has been appealed to for answers.²

At first blush, one might be tempted to view these two lines of thought as having nothing whatsoever in common. However, further reflection reveals that, certainly in the Anglo-American world and perhaps in larger circles, strategic decisions concerning whether to go to war and, once engaged, how to fight the war, almost invariably involve considerations associated with both Clausewitz—and in particular, his “remarkable trinity”—and with the just war tradition³. This is particularly true since the Information Age has made available to private citizens the opportunity to assess the viability of political arguments on the moral justification for war, as well as to assess the degree of faithfulness with which the military is perceived to observe moral imperatives as it conducts war. Thus, while, in earlier eras, the lack of near real-time information from

the battlefield may have afforded strategists and policymakers the supposed leeway to conduct war without regard to public reaction over issues with obvious moral implications, that day is forever gone—as witnessed recently in the case of prisoner abuse scandals in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay.

The ability, afforded by the Information Age, for the public to form moral judgments (accurate or not) of political and military decisions has important implications for the “remarkable trinity” and its viability as a strategic model. Specifically it invites the following questions:

- To what extent does the “remarkable trinity” accommodate the concerns of the just war tradition?
- What might the “remarkable trinity” look like if it were overtly to illustrate the strategic effect of moral considerations on decisions about war?

One might feel tempted to dismiss questions like these as nothing more than a vain attempt to reconcile incommensurables. Nevertheless, since both Clausewitzian thought and the just war tradition feature prominently in the Anglo-American philosophy of war, it seems altogether appropriate to seek to understand the true nature of their interrelation and how that convergence might be reflected in the “remarkable trinity.” Accordingly, this study takes as its task to:

- set forth the fundamental notions of both the just war tradition and the Clausewitzian trinity;

- consider how ideas similar to these have been accommodated in “trinities” which predate Clausewitz; then, taking a cue from these earlier models,
- propose a model of the Clausewitzian trinity which takes into account the imperatives of the just war tradition without doing damage to Clausewitzian imperatives; and finally,
- evaluate the relevance of the resulting paradigm to the development of military strategy in the Information Age.

Fundamentals of the Just War Tradition

In broadest terms, the just war tradition concerns itself with the conditions for the moral justification of war and, once engaged, the moral parameters within which the war must be fought. The former are *jus ad bellum* (i.e., the justice of war) considerations, and the latter are *jus in bello* (i.e., justice in war) considerations. Most theorists agree that *jus ad bellum* justification for waging war embodies, in some combination, the following principles: a cause that is both objectively just and comparatively more just than the opponent’s cause, a morally right intention, a public declaration of war based on the decision of a competent authority made as a last resort, a reasonable probability of success, and an expectation of a proportionately (moral) good result from the war with peace as the war’s ultimate objective.⁴ In the aggregate, these principles traditionally are taken to specify the necessary conditions for engaging in a just war. That is, given that the conditions specified by these principles are met, a state would thereby be considered as having acquired moral license (although not necessarily the moral obligation) to engage in war. However, even a war adjudged to be just on *jus ad*

bellum grounds can cease to be just if, over time, the justifying conditions cease to be met. (For example, America's current "Long War" in southwest Asia could fall short of adequate *jus ad bellum* justification if it ceased to be prosecuted for just causes or with a right intention or if success, however defined, could not be demonstrated to be a reasonable possibility.) Moreover, a war initiated on just grounds can cease to be a just war if it is not actually fought in a just manner. Hence, two *jus in bello* principles traditionally have served to delimit the just application of military force, namely, proportionality in the use of force consistent with "military necessity,"⁵ and discrimination between combatants and noncombatants.⁶ Acknowledgement of these principles entails concurrent recognition of a burden of moral obligation to be borne by all segments of those societies which fight wars—their leaders, their militaries, and their people; and it is precisely this tripartite moral burden which points us toward Clausewitz's "remarkable trinity."

Clausewitz's "Remarkable Trinity"

The "remarkable trinity" is not itself a moral-theoretical construct. Indeed, let us clearly note that moral considerations as embodied in the just war tradition *do not* receive explicit treatment in On War. While, for example, Clausewitz is concerned that the general who fights should have a reasonable probability of victory,⁷ his concern appears to be founded on strictly pragmatic, rather than moral, concerns. This may surprise the casual reader of On War, since Clausewitz uses word "moralisch" or grammatical variations of it (which Howard and Paret correctly translate into English as "moral" or grammatical variations of it, or as "morale") no fewer than 60 times.⁸

However, when Clausewitz uses the word “moral,” he appears to mean things like “courage,” “tenacity,” “force of will,” or other similar traditional soldierly virtues. What he does *not* appear to mean is “moral” in the sense of choosing to act in a way that accords with an objective standard of right and consciously refusing to do that which, by the same objective standard, is wrong or blameworthy—ideas which are out of place with most military-realist accounts. However, the fact that Clausewitz does not deal with moral issues per se does not mean that he considered “morality,” as understood in the context of the just war tradition, to have no place in strategic discourse. Moreover, the fact that Clausewitz does not deal with moral considerations as understood by the just war tradition does not imply that no place exists, or should exist, for them in his model. With this in mind, let us examine what Clausewitz himself says, and what he has been interpreted to say, about the nature of the “remarkable trinity.”

Clausewitz’s “remarkable trinity” is set forth in one of the most widely read (if not most widely misunderstood) passages in On War. (Punctuation in the following quotation has been modified in order to make more perspicuous the distinctions which concern the present study):

War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a remarkable trinity—composed:

- of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force;

- of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam;
- and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.⁹

Clausewitz then draws the following parallel:

- The first of these three aspects [listed above] mainly concerns the people;
- the second, the commander and his army;
- the third the government.¹⁰

He then associates these parallel notions as follows:

- The passions that are to be kindled in war must already be inherent in the people [and although not stated, are certain to be inflamed or attenuated based on the amount of information available to the people];
- the scope which the play of courage and talent will enjoy in the realm of probability and chance depends on the particular character of the commander of the army;
- but the political aims are the business of government alone.¹¹

The initial segment of this passage seems to provide an account of war that focuses upon the *characteristics* of actors in the “remarkable trinity,” rather than upon the actors themselves, as shown in figure 1 on page 20 (this and all other figures appear at the end of this study). By way of comparison, Summers, in his influential work, On Strategy, champions an interpretation of the “remarkable trinity,” which highlights the actors rather than the actors’ characteristics¹², as shown in figure 2 on

page 21. Villacres and Bassford have criticized Summers for advocating this interpretation which, they believe, misses the essence of Clausewitz's philosophy.¹³ In truth, however, both of the above interpretations must be considered in tandem in order to appreciate the richness of the "remarkable trinity," and both will prove useful tools in the quest to understand the place of just war considerations in the model as a whole.

It is also important to consider that, while both interpretations seem to give primacy to a world view taken from a military perspective, it nevertheless remains the case that all three actors in the trinity possess unique and equally valid perspectives—perspectives of which the Information Age takes ample notice. Thus, it is not the case that one can fully appreciate the complexities of war and simultaneously ignore the reality that, in addition to the military perspective, there exists also a governmental perspective and popular perspective which, even if not made explicit by Clausewitz, must be taken into consideration. Clausewitz, more than some of his interpreters seem to have given him credit for, appreciated this reality, and he stated as much in his own brief analysis:

These three tendencies are like three different codes of law, deep-rooted in their subject and yet variable in their relationship to one another. A theory that ignores any one of them or seeks to fix an arbitrary relationship between them would conflict with reality to such an extent that for this reason alone it would be totally useless.¹⁴

Clausewitz concludes his analysis of the trinity with an intriguing challenge, which takes us right to the heart of the present study: "Our task therefore [says Clausewitz] is to develop a theory that maintains a balance between these three tendencies, like an

object suspended between three magnets.”¹⁵ Indeed, when one considers the “remarkable trinity” as a whole and considers the perspectives of all of its actors, the magnetic suspension of the trinitarian elements becomes nigh unto impossible when attempted without due regard for moral considerations as set forth in just war theory. The influence of just war theoretical notions upon warfare is sometimes subtle, sometimes prominent, but always present. In order to appreciate the role of moral questions as they may be understood to affect the “remarkable trinity,” let us first examine two pre-Clausewitzian societal models, both of which are trinitarian in nature and both of which include military realist and moral idealist notions.

The Socratic “Trinity”

Twenty centuries before Clausewitz, Socrates, as reported by Plato, presented a trinitarian social model (figure 3, page 24) which, like Clausewitz’s trinity, illustrates the interplay between the people, the military, and the government and outlines the characteristics associated with each actor.¹⁶

Socrates’ social model includes both rulers and “auxiliaries” (i.e., those charged with the actual prosecution of armed combat) in the broader category of “guardians” of the state. The fact that Socrates distinguishes between rulers and war fighting “auxiliaries” and at the same time unites them under a general heading is of particular interest in light of Clausewitz’s often misunderstood—and misappropriated—claim that “war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse carried on with other means.”¹⁷ On the one hand, Socrates thus acknowledges that, in order to ensure the security of the political state, agencies other

than the rulers may be called upon from time to time to conduct the business of politics, only in its most violent form. On the other hand, the joint designation of these agencies as “guardians” serves to reinforce the point that Socrates recognizes the interconnectedness of the elements of his own trinity: The rulers may direct the work of the auxiliaries, but the rulers also depend upon them to maintain a secure environment in which the state can thrive, as well as survive.

This important tie between rulers and auxiliaries has important implications for the craftsman class as well. Socrates holds, for example, that the economic well-being of the state (as embodied in the interests of the craftsman class) might require the rulers to direct the auxiliaries to expand the borders of the state by conquest.)¹⁸ Indeed, Socrates may take us farther than any other author along the path of understanding the subtle but significant correspondence between the elements of the two parallel interpretations of the “remarkable trinity” in figures 1 and 2: Not only do both rulers and auxiliaries bear responsibility for the protection of the state, but they also exist in a sort of symbiotic relationship with each other and with the people. Each enables the other, such that Clausewitz might just as well have added that “warfare is statecraft or economics by other means.” That is, taken in context, Clausewitz cannot be understood to mean that war is merely a one-way, linear extension of political action, but rather that it exists merely as one (albeit an important) component in a complex interrelationship with all aspects of society.

Socrates additionally had as his aim to show that the interrelationships among the people, the military, and the government are rooted in moral considerations. For

example, he takes pains to locate the four cardinal virtues of antiquity (i.e., wisdom, courage, temperance or self-discipline, and justice) within his social model. Two of the cardinal moral virtues he assigns to the “guardian” class: “wisdom” as the distinguishing virtue of those who govern and “courage” as the distinguishing virtue of those who fight. He argues that “justice” (the harmony present among the parts of society in general or of individuals in particular) and “temperance,” (i.e., self-control) ideally are found in the individual actors in all three divisions of the social trinity, because these virtues have to do with the way in which these actors interrelate.

Two points critical to be understood for the present discussion are:

- first, that Socrates understands the value of the moral virtues to lie—not alone in their practical value for the state, but—in the goodness which is inherent in the virtues themselves; the value that these virtues have for the state derives from the goodness intrinsic to the virtues; and
- second, each actor in the social trinity is bound to the others by bonds of moral obligation.

That is, if one set of actors in the trinity defaults in its responsibility to observe specific moral virtues, society as a whole cannot function as it should. Without this proper interrelational functioning of society, the people, the military, and the government will find it commensurately difficult—if not impossible—to perform their respective functions. The clear inference, then, is that one cannot disrupt the harmonious interrelationship which constitutes the essence of “justice” without potentially far-reaching consequences for the state.

Some might argue that the interrelationships found in the Socratic model ultimately hinge—not on moral considerations, but rather—on enlightened self-interest (since, for example, rulers could order auxiliaries to war merely because it was in the economic interests of the craftsman class). However, that certainly is not Socrates' argument. Socrates insists that the properly functioning society is a morally virtuous one and that the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice stand as the hallmarks of a healthy state. To the extent that these virtues promote the common good, they become moral imperatives by almost any utilitarian moral account. To the extent that they reflect the duties of corresponding segments of society, they become moral imperatives by almost any deontological moral account.

Granted, it does not unavoidably follow from this claim that the just war principles per se must be understood as permanent and inextricable features of the Socratic social model. However, no such insistence is necessary to establish the thesis of this study. It is necessary only to establish, at this stage, that a trinitarian model possessing features strikingly similar to Clausewitz's "remarkable trinity" can be shown to include *moral considerations* as inextricable features.

The Medieval Social Model

The claim that the various elements of society are morally interconnected is also clear in another tripartite social model which, although much later than the Socratic model, still predates Clausewitz by several centuries, namely the medieval European social model (figure 4, page 23). This model prevailed in the Latin-speaking western world during the interval between the fall of Rome in the fifth century A.D. and the rise of

the Westphalian nation-state in the 17th century A.D. The power vacuum resulting from the fall of Rome left the Roman Catholic Church as the sole hierarchically organized and virtually ubiquitous candidate for a unifying agent in Latin-speaking Western Europe. However, the church's only undisputed province was the realm of spiritual matters. Thus, it was not always clear who should be in charge of the comparatively dirty business of temporal concerns, including the fighting of wars. Sometimes the church took the lead in matters related to *jus in bello* (as in the case of the campaigns of the "warrior pope" Julius II¹⁹), and at other times a feudal lord, prince, king, or emperor took the lead. However, for present purposes, it is sufficient to stipulate that "political direction" came from the "sovereign," be that sovereign of whatever source, ecclesiastical or temporal.

In the middle ages, every member of feudal society belonged to one of three distinct classes:

- those who prayed,
- those who fought, and
- those who produced;

and each class was entirely dependent upon the diligent and successful prosecution of the tasks which belonged to the other two classes. Those who prayed (often up to 18 hours a day in monasteries) were responsible to secure divine favor for soldiers and producers. Those who fought were responsible to protect the temporal interests of clerics and producers so that both could pursue their vocations without fear of disruption

or molestation. Those who produced provided the means for clerics and warriors to accomplish their responsibilities.²⁰

The medieval world did not possess the modern and post-modern concept of “getting ahead,” as it were, within the social structure. Each person was born into a particular class whose function was absolutely crucial to the well-being of society as a whole. Each who did his job thereby not only contributed *toward* the well-being of society, but in his or her own right, actually *secured* the well-being of every other member of society. Thus, two important points become evident:

- Each member of society was bound by interlocking bonds of moral obligation to every other member of society.
- Anyone who failed to perform his or her social duty fell short on *moral* as well as social grounds.

Of particular interest in the present context is that warriors were understood to be morally bound to every other member of society in terms of the way in which they prosecuted war. (Indeed, it is no accident that much of the just war tradition acquired its most highly developed form during the medieval period.) Those who fought but disregarded the moral (and from the standpoint of the medievals, logical) demands of *jus ad bellum* or *jus in bello* invited disaster to befall the whole of society: On the one hand, those who prayed and those who worked could not expect divine favor if those who fought acted in a way that failed to take due account of justice and fairness or that failed to minimize human suffering. On the other hand, those who fought placed society on the path to economic ruin if they failed to take due account of the cost of an

unwinnable war, or if they wantonly destroyed the economic livelihood of an adversary's producers, thereby subjecting their own producers to the possibility of reprisal. Thus, at every turn, the tripartite divisions of society were dependent not only upon the general moral virtue of all segments of society, but also upon the specific adherence to just war principles by those who fought.

The "Remarkable Trinity" and Just War Theory in Information Age Warfare

We turn now, in light of the Socratic and medieval paradigms, to a consideration of the nexus between the just war tradition and the "remarkable trinity" (figure 5, page 24). The Socratic and medieval social trinities clearly illustrate that the idea of tripartite but thoroughly interconnected social elements is one which well antedates Clausewitz. Moreover, they illustrate the notion that the interconnections are thoroughly laden with, if not actually founded upon, moral considerations. No claim is made that Clausewitz's trinity necessarily constitutes a response to the earlier models, but no such connection is necessary to demonstrate. It is merely necessary to show that social models similar to the Clausewitzian trinity are replete with implications for moral theory. Thus, with the Socratic and medieval social models in mind, let us now consider the Clausewitzian trinity, with special attention to the matter of the extent to which his model can be understood to accommodate just war concerns.

It does not matter that Clausewitz himself may not have intended for his "remarkable trinity" to illustrate the nexus between military realism and just war theory. Indeed, truly elegant models often possess explanatory capacity beyond that recognized—or even intended—by their authors. Moreover, nothing in Clausewitz's

work requires that the decision to continue “policy by other means”²¹ exclude moral considerations as understood in just war theory. Similarly, Clausewitz gives no appearance of advocating that soldiers should (or must) disregard *jus in bello* considerations. Even Clausewitz’s famous claim that “[t]o introduce the principle of moderation into the theory of war itself would always lead to a logical absurdity”²² can be understood as a descriptive rather than a prescriptive claim. In fact, it may be that just war theory owes its existence to a descriptive claim of this very kind. In an important way, just war theory constitutes the counterbalance to the tendency toward absolutism described (but not necessarily embraced)²³ by Clausewitz and, to that extent, can be seen as a moderating influence calculated to help maintain the equilibrium necessary to keep “an object suspended between [the] three magnets”²⁴ which characterize the trinitarian actors.

Interconnections between the actors of the “remarkable trinity” and just war considerations become particularly clear when the people, the military, and the government are characterized as loci for instruments of national diplomatic, informational, military, or economic power. Consider for example, the following interconnections:

- The *government’s* use of the diplomatic instrument points directly to the just war claim that all remedies short of war must be exhausted prior to unleashing the violence of the *military* instrument.

- The informational instrument is the means by which *public* consideration is given to the question of whether or not to go to war or, once war is decided upon as the course of choice, the instrument by which an adversary either is served notice or given an ultimatum.

- The economic instrument largely determines *jus ad bellum* evaluations, made by both *military* and *government*, of whether a war can be fought with a reasonable chance of success. This is particularly so in the present age of “just-in-time” logistics, when *jus ad bellum* assessments of reasonable chance of success inevitably will be colored, if not largely determined, by logistic concerns.

- Although the *military* instrument of national power resides squarely in the combatants’ realm (and hence, in the realm of *jus in bello*), still it is the case that war fighters can, by their moral conduct, effectively either validate or refute the *jus ad bellum* claims made by the *government* to the effect that, for example, the war is underwritten by the right moral intentions. In a similar vein, moral missteps can have profound effect on the *popular* support of a war effort.

All of this is so because the government, the people, and the military are inextricably bound to each other in the trinity, and the degree of synergy they can obtain in the war-making enterprise inevitably will be either enhanced or degraded, depending upon the care they take vis-à-vis just war considerations.

Contemporary Application

Although the realist might continue to insist that moral discourse has no place in the politics of war, the facts of the Information Age clearly seem to contradict that

position. The current conflict in southwest Asia serves as a striking illustration of how public access to information of moral import (whether or not the information reported is accurate, presented in proper context, etc.) affects the nexus between the Clausewitzian trinity and perceptions as to how effectively just war principles are being applied—a question which affects *all* actors in the trinity. For example, prior to the invasion of Iraq, the government argued extensively in an effort to establish the full range of *jus ad bellum* principles, to wit:

- that the invasion of Iraq would be both just and comparatively just,
- that it was undertaken with right intention and as a last resort,
- that proper authority was sought (if not obtained) from competent assemblies (i.e., Congress or the United Nations),
- that there was reason to expect that outcomes would be successful,
- that the moral good that could be expected to result would outweigh other considerations, and
- that peace could be realized.

While the question of whether the government met its burden of proof may remain an open question, the fact is that the government presented its case in unmistakably just war terms; and by so doing, the government sought to confer upon the military the *moral* authority to conduct war. At the same time, the government sought to marshal public opinion as to the moral propriety of the war. Both military and public gave tacit assent to the moral arguments, as evidenced by the fact that the military went to war and Congress did not obstruct the military by legislative means.

Similar interconnections exist in terms of *jus in bello* principles, as seen in the example of the treatment of prisoners of war—even though the definition of what constitutes a “prisoner of war” in the current conflict in southwest Asia has been a subject of debate. The perception of moral misconduct on the part of the military at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere raised both public and government scrutiny concerning the suggestion that the military or its members had violated the bond of moral trust between it and the government and between it and the people.

All of this points to the conclusion that the actors in Clausewitz’s “remarkable trinity” not only exert a profound influence upon one another in the calculus of war, but also that their interactions are permeated with moral considerations as enshrined by the just war tradition. That is to say, in spite of Clausewitz’s realist rhetoric, it appears that the “remarkable trinity” is useful as, among other things, an explanatory device for matters of moral import, as set forth by the just war tradition.

If ever there was a time, before or after Clausewitz, when military realists should have believed that they could afford the “luxury” of undertaking war without respect to moral considerations, that time certainly is past. As the United States faces the increasingly ominous prospect of a “Long War” in southwest Asia without any certain terminus, it becomes crucial for the nation to reflect carefully upon the nature of the moral considerations that connect the elements of the “remarkable trinity.” This is so because, if for no other reason, the Information Age has so facilitated near-real-time reporting of political deliberations and battlefield events that the private citizen no longer can be considered shrouded in “invincible ignorance”²⁵ such that only government

officials can be regarded as occupying a sufficiently informed position from which to reflect upon just war considerations. On the contrary, just war considerations are now part of the public debate across the entire social spectrum.

Indeed, all three actors in the “remarkable trinity” have a vested interest—not only in the political and economic outcomes of a war, but—also in the moral outcomes of war. For example, if justifications for going to war are questionable or difficult to demonstrate (as some would argue was the case in the U.S. attempt to justify the invasion of Iraq on the basis of alleged evidence of the presence of weapons of mass destruction),²⁶ the continual availability of news reports effectively places the people in a position, along with government and military, to opine upon the moral propriety of war thus justified. Similarly, if morally outrageous behavior is manifest on or near the battlefield (as was the case at Abu Ghraib prison),²⁷ modern telecommunications will ensure that that behavior is impossible to hide.

In sum, both realist and idealist constructs—especially those reflected in the just war tradition—enjoy a comfortable fit with Clausewitz’s “remarkable trinity.” One ignores the realist connections between the elements of the trinity at the risk of losing on the battlefield. One ignores the moral connections between the elements of the trinity at the risk of corroding the moral bonds of obligation which bind together the actors in the trinity and, at worst, at the risk of breaking those bonds altogether.²⁸ Indeed, inasmuch as the Information Age has laid open to the plain view of all—the military, the government, and the people—the moral implications of war-making

decisions by government and the violent execution of “policy by other means”²⁹ on the battlefield, all actors in the “remarkable trinity” must understand and appreciate the nexus between the “remarkable trinity” itself and the demands of just war theory. In the

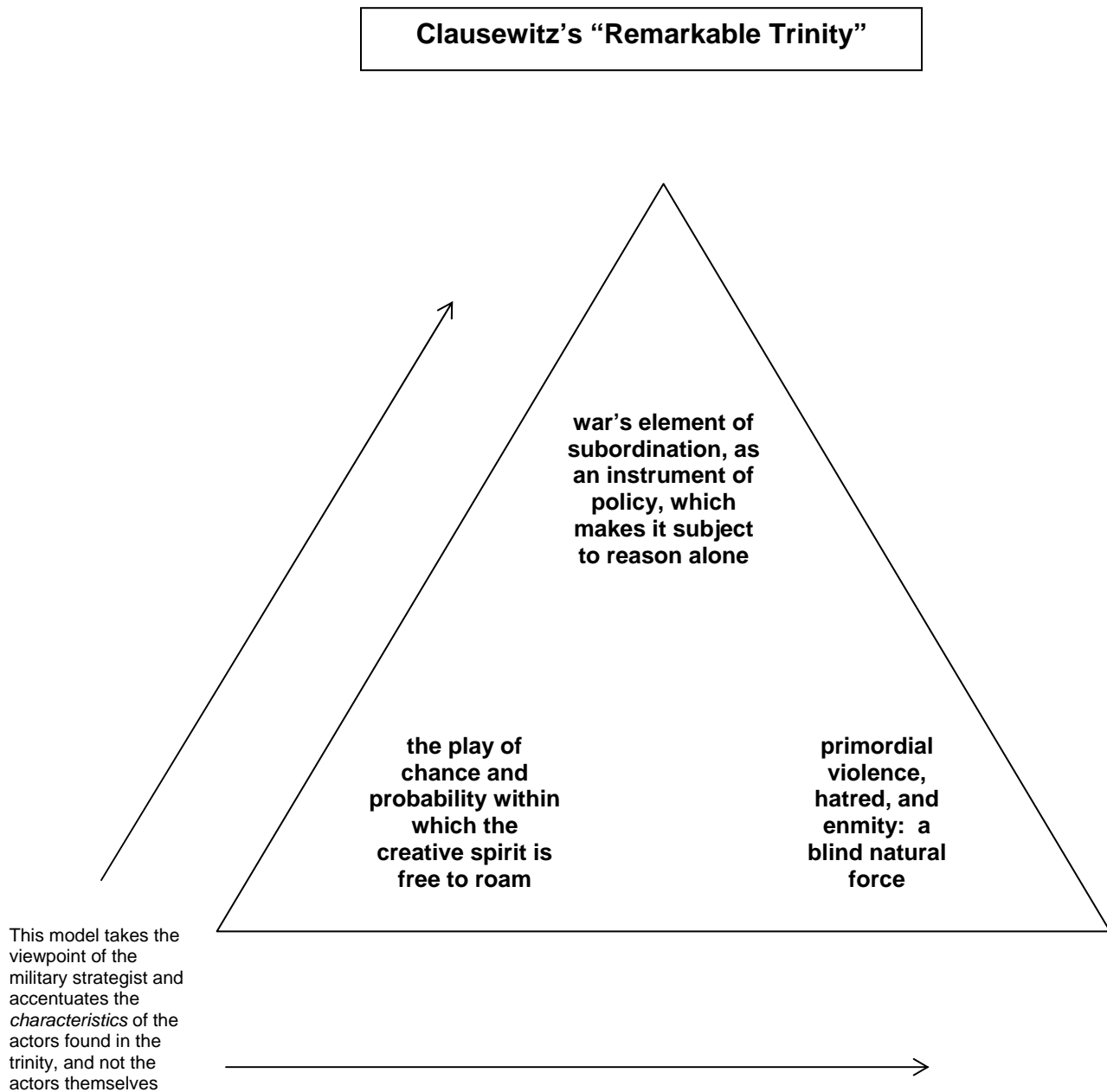


Figure 1.

**Clausewitz's "Remarkable Trinity:
Summers' interpretation**

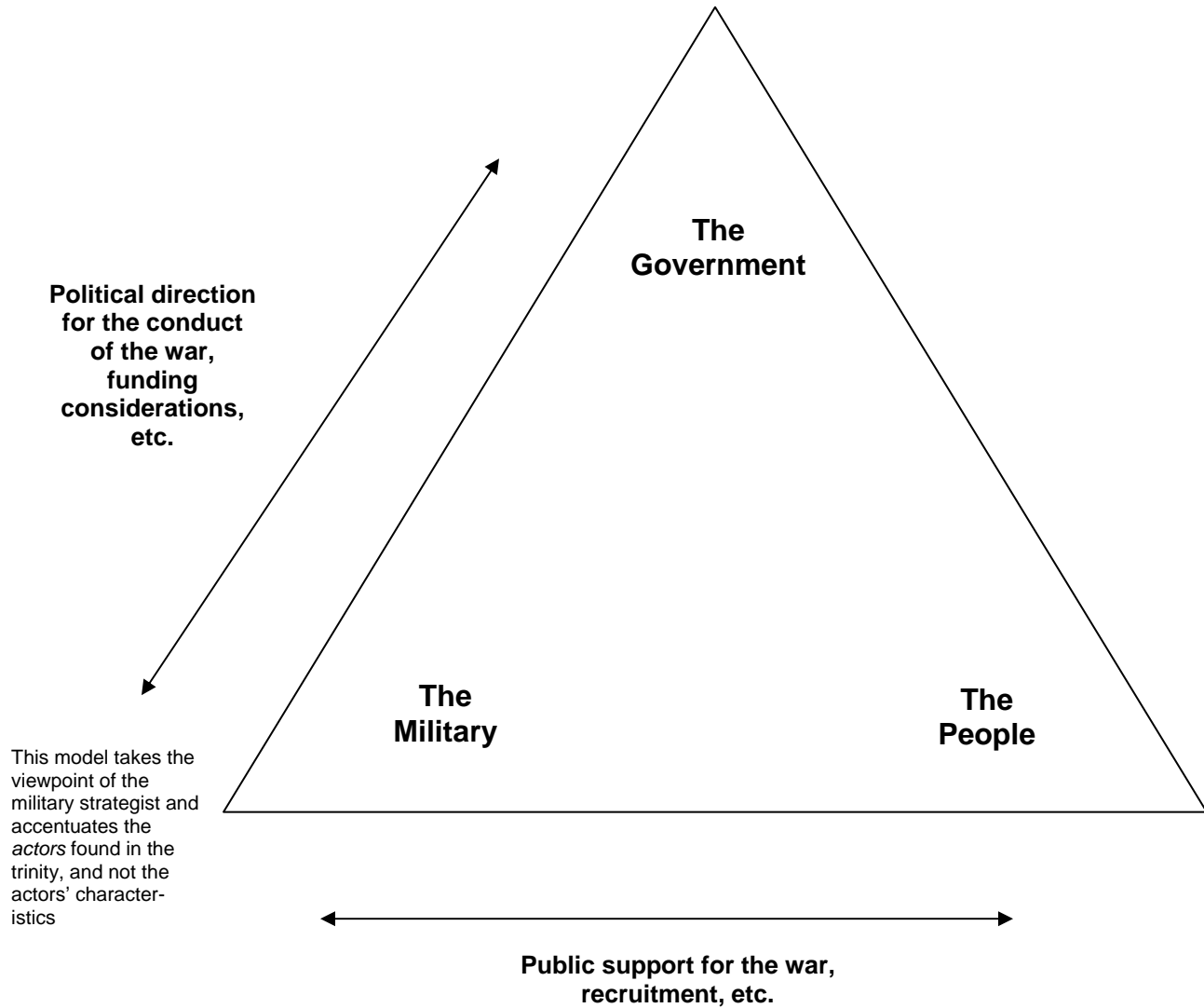
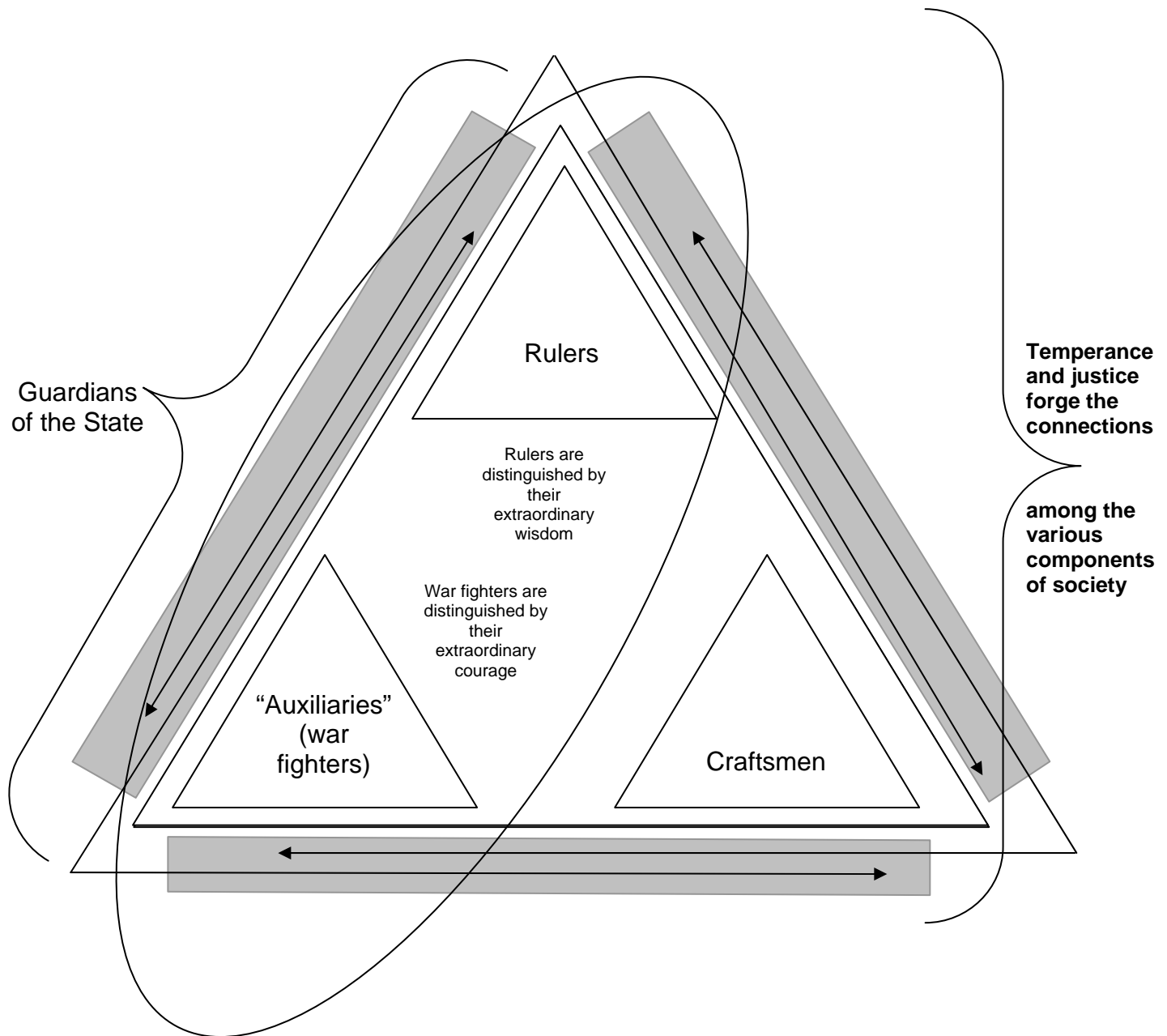


Figure 2.

The Socratic Model of the State



Interlocking bonds of *moral* obligation (shown in gray above) characterized by justice (i.e., each social segment *reliably* performing its proper function) and by temperance (i.e., each social segment performing its proper function in *proper degree*)—"proper" being defined as that course which is most likely to produce harmonious interaction between the actors in the trinity with the result that all members of society can attain *eudemonia*—"human flourishing," or "the good life," which the ancient Greeks understood to be the ideal state for human beings.

Figure 3.

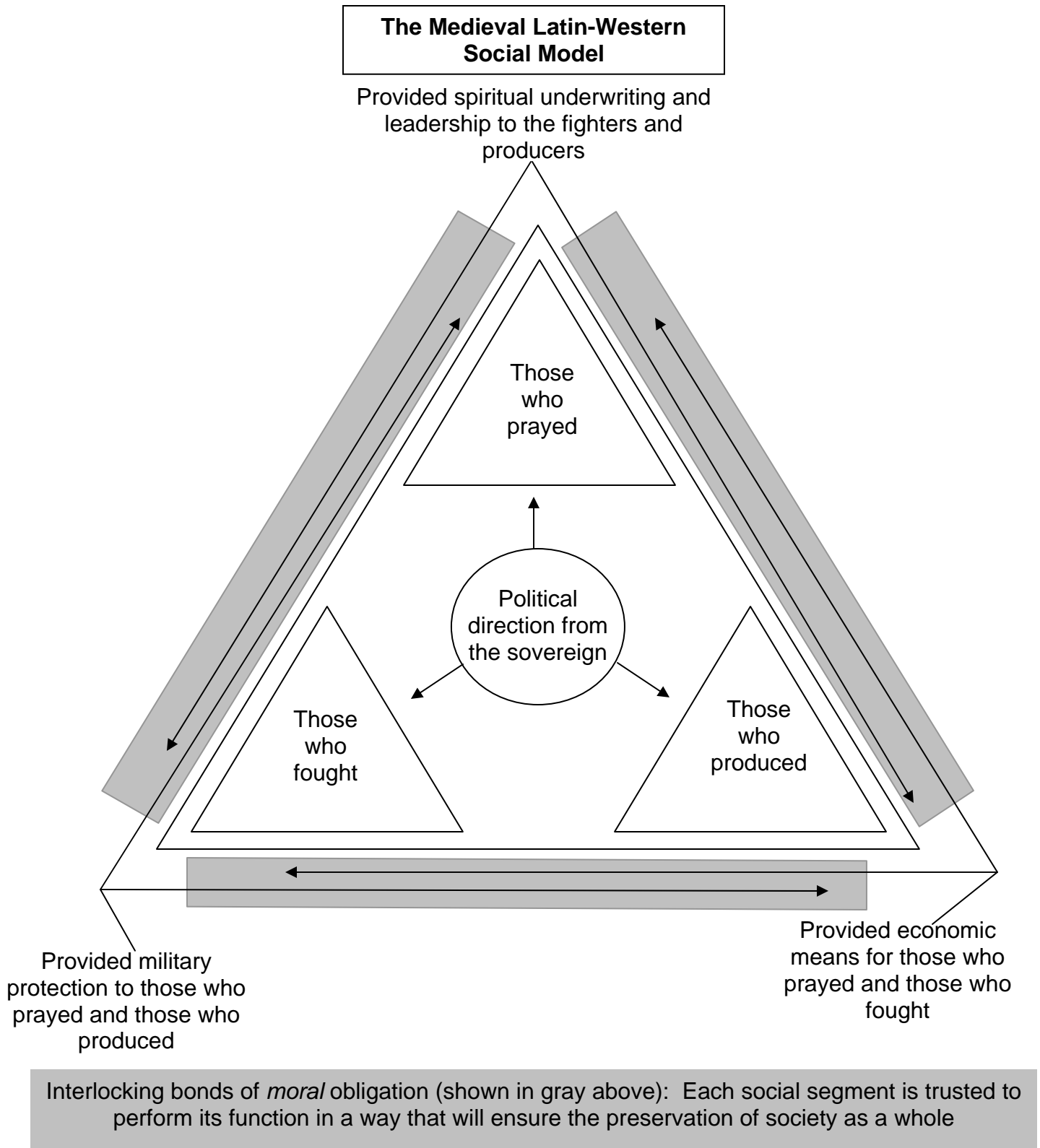


Figure 4.

A Just War Approach to Clausewitz's "Remarkable Trinity"

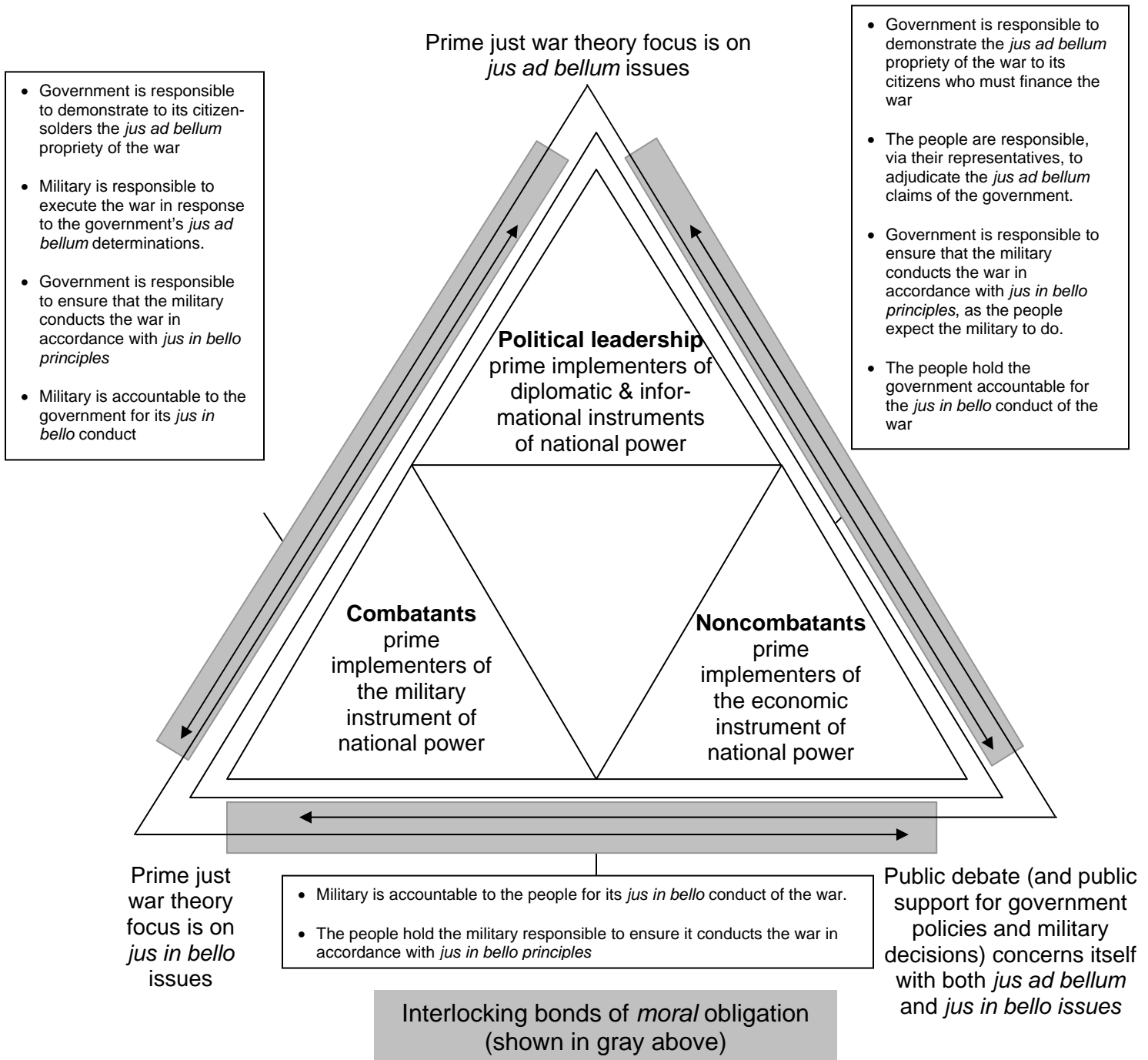


Figure 5.

Endnotes

¹ See Christopher Bassford, "Clausewitz and His Works," originally published in earlier version as Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), chap. 2; revised and re-published as courseware for the Army War College, 2002.

² See Alex Mosley, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, s.v. "The Just War." Available online at <http://www.utm.edu/research/iep/j/justwar.htm>; Internet; accessed 23 July 2001.

³ Note that the claim here is not that all wars are fought in strict accordance with the just war tradition, but merely that contesting parties almost invariably weigh just war-theoretical considerations when making strategic decisions about going to war or about conducting wars already begun.

⁴ John Mark Mattox, St. Augustine and the Theory of Just War (London: Thommes Continuum, 2006), 8-11. Expanded definitions of the traditional *jus ad bellum* principles are as follows:

Just cause: The reason for a state's considering to resort to war must, itself, be a just reason.

Comparative justice: In addition to a state's having a just cause for the prosecution of war (a position which both or multiple parties in a dispute are likely to claim), the state's claims also must be of such magnitude that the traditional presumption against war is overridden.

Right intention: The internal motivation of those contemplating war must itself be just. Evidence of right intention might include earnest pursuit of peace negotiations, the avoidance of potentially unreasonable demands, etc. The motivation should not involve any desire for territorial expansion, intimidation or coercion and should be devoid of hatred for the enemy, implacable animosity, or a desire for vengeance or domination.

Competent authority: War can be declared only by the sovereign agency recognized within the social framework as having authority to do so.

Last resort: No state is justified in engaging in war if it can be avoided by any reasonable means. That is, the prevailing circumstances must clearly indicate that no means short of war would be sufficient to obtain satisfaction for just grievances or wrongs against the state.

Public declaration: The state must declare publicly either that a condition of war exists or that war will follow if specific conditions are not met.

Reasonable probability of success: Wars which present little prospect for serving as vehicles to obtain satisfaction for just grievances are not morally justifiable. (This, of course, is to be understood in light of the proviso that certain key moral values might be so important as to merit defense even in the face of seemingly overwhelming odds.)

Proportionality: The moral good expected to result from a war must exceed the amount of evil that war naturally and unavoidably entails.

Peace as the ultimate objective of war: The restoration of happiness and the avoidance of future violence—in short, a just and lasting peace—must be the end for which the war is fought.

⁵ Department of the Army, Law of Land Warfare, Field Manual 27-10 (Washington: Government Printing Office, July, 1956), 4.

⁶ Mattox 2006, 8-11. Expanded definitions of the traditional *jus in bello* principles are as follows:

Proportionality: Combatants must use the minimum force necessary, consistent with military necessity, to bring a conflict to a justly peaceful resolution as quickly as possible.

Discrimination: Belligerent parties must distinguish between combatants and noncombatants, with the former normally constituting the only acceptable objects of violent action. This distinction which, of course, is difficult to apply to guerilla warfare, nonetheless constitutes the point of departure for *jus in bello* theoretical discussions.

⁷ See Carl von Clausewitz, On War, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 90-99.

⁸ Ibid., 75, 85-86, 91, 93, 97, 100, 102, 104, 110-111, 127, 136-138, 177-178, 183-186, 188-189, 201, 206, 217, 231-232, 234, 242, 245, 250, 253-254, 256, 261, 271, 331, 333, 363, 366, 372, 415, 466, 470-471, 475, 477, 483, 528, 530, 532, 545, 549, 595, 597, 601, 604, 606, and 620. Compare with the German in Carl von Clausewitz, On War (München: Ullstein Verlag, 2003).

⁹ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1982), 26-27.

¹³ Christopher Bassford and Edward J. Villacres, "Reclaiming the Clausewitzian Trinity," Parameters, Autumn 1995, 9-19.

¹⁴ Clausewitz, 89.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Plato, The Republic, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 615-661.

¹⁷ Clausewitz, 87.

¹⁸ Plato, 620.

¹⁹ Will Durrant, The Renaissance (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), 441-447.

²⁰ Philip Daileader, The High Middle Ages, Part 1 (Chantilly: The Teaching Company, 2001), 9.

²¹ Clausewitz, 87.

²² Ibid., 76.

²³ Although to deal with this issue at length would take us afield from the present task, it should be noted, in passing at least, that Clausewitz may not have been the thorough-going realist that he often is portrayed to be. Janeen Klinger notes: "Not only was Clausewitz not the Prussian aggressor or proponent of total war as he is sometimes caricatured, but he was a genuine voice of moderation among Prussian military leaders. An example of his moderation can be found in his discussion of the balance of power in Book 6, Chapter 6. His analysis suggests that common effort and common interest ultimately maintained the balance of power rather than sheer military might—a view that in contemporary social science places his ideas closer to liberal international relations theory than to realism. After Napoleon's final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo, many of Clausewitz's contemporaries were urging revenge against France while Clausewitz resisted this temptation. Ultimately, Clausewitz's moderation meant that he had a better grasp of the requisite conditions for a lasting peace agreement. He expressed his views in a candid letter to his wife: 'My dearest wish now is that this aftermath should soon be finished. I dislike this position of having my foot upon someone's neck, and the endless conflicts of interests and parties are something I do not understand. Historically, the English will play a better role in this catastrophe, because they do not seem to have come here with a passion for revenge and for settling old scores, but rather like a master who wishes to discipline with proud coldness and immaculate purity; in brief, with greater distinction than ourselves.'" See Janeen Klinger, "The Social Science of Carl von Clausewitz, Parameters, Spring 2006, 81-82.

²⁴ Clausewitz, 87.

²⁵ See Paul Christopher, The Ethics of War and Peace: An Introduction to Legal and Moral Issues 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), 57 ff.

²⁶ Angus Reid Global Monitor : Polls & Research, "Americans Still Peeved at Iraq WMD Reports;" available online at <http://www.angus-reid.com/polls/index.cfm/fuseaction/viewItem/itemID/13423>; Internet; accessed 28 October 2006.

²⁷ Global Policy Forum, Occupation and Rule in Iraq: Torture and Prison Abuse; available online at <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/issues/iraq/tortureindex.htm>; Internet; accessed 28 October 2006.

²⁸ John Mark Mattox, "The Moral Foundations of Army Officership," Chapter 17 in The Future of the Army Profession, 2d ed., ed. Lloyd J. Matthews (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2005), 387-408.

²⁹ Clausewitz, 87.